

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-47 were pending. Claims 1, 12-14, 23-25, and 30-32 are hereby amended, claims 8, 9, 17-19, 34, and 36-42 are hereby canceled and new claim 48 is hereby added. Therefore, upon entry of this amendment, which is respectfully requested, claims 1-7, 10-16, 20-33, 35 and 43 -48 will be pending.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the allowance of claims 43-47.

Claims 9, 10 and 19 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, in order to expedite allowance of claims and issuance of a Patent, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 9 and intervening claim 8. Similarly, independent claim 12 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 19. New claim 48 has been added and includes the limitations of claim 10 incorporated into prior claim 1. Claims 8 -10 and 19 have accordingly been canceled. It is respectfully asserted that independent claims 1, 12 and 48 and all claims that depend therefrom are allowable.

Independent claims 23 and 30 have also been amended to include limitations similar to those added to independent claims 1 and 12, respectively, in order to expedite allowance of the claims and issuance of a Patent. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully assert that these claims are allowable for similar, if not identical, reasoning as to the allowability of claims 9 and 19, now included in amended independent claims 1 and 12.

Claims 1-3, 6, 7, 11-16, 20-25, 28-33 and 36-42 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,5039,250) in view of Amos (U.S. Patent No. 6,554,184). Claims 4, 5, 8, 17, 18, 26, 27, 34 and 35 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al. in view of Amos and further in view of Picciallo (U.S. Patent No. 6,044,360).

In view of the amendments made to independent claims 1, 12, 23 and 30, as well as the cancellation of claims 36-42, Applicants respectfully assert that these rejections are moot. In particular, all pending claims now include limitations as were indicated as being allowable by the Examiner.

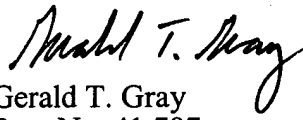
Applicants reserve the right to file a continuation application to pursue prosecution, including arguing the patentability and traversing the rejections, of the claims as pending prior to this amendment.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 925-472-5000.

Respectfully submitted,


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